

UNITED NATIONS



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**Introduction of Secretary-General progress report on the SDGs
High-Level Political Forum**

Conference Room 4, UNHQ, 9 July 2019, 10:00 am,

**Madame President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my great honor to introduce the special edition of the Secretary-General's progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals.

I introduce this on behalf of both myself and my colleague, Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, in our role as Co-Chairs of the United Nations System Task Team on the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

The Task Team is comprised of the Secretariat and the organizations of the United Nations system, who collaborated in the preparation of the report.

The special edition uses the latest available data to track global progress on the SDGs and to take stock of how far we have come in realizing our commitments.

It shows that, over the past four years, progress has been made in a number of Goals and targets. It also demonstrates, however, that progress has been slow on many other Goals, and that the most vulnerable people and countries continue to suffer the most.

The report addresses the global response to the 2030 Agenda, and its dynamism and shortcoming. It points to the gaps and challenges, and efforts that are needed for accelerating its implementation. It highlights cross-cutting actions to advance progress on all the Goals, including those falling behind.

Excellencies,

It is undeniable that more people live better lives today than ever before:

- Extreme poverty has reduced considerably.**
 - Global under-five mortality rate has fallen by almost half since 2000.**
 - Immunizations have saved millions of lives.**
 - Life expectancy has increased.**
 - 90% of the world's population now has access to electricity.**
 - Labour productivity has increased and unemployment is back to pre-financial crisis levels.**
 - The extent of marine protected areas has doubled since 2010.**
- Governments have taken action to pursue the SDGs.**

- **185 parties ratified the Paris Agreement and almost all communicated their first nationally determined contributions.**
- **About 150 countries have developed national urban policies to respond to the urbanization challenges.**
- **And 71 countries and the European Union had a total of 303 policies and instruments supporting sustainable consumption and production.**

Distinguished Delegates,

The evidence and data also raise alarm for the state of our only planet. The earth's condition is deteriorating at an alarming rate.

- **Sea levels are rising.**
- **Ocean acidification is accelerating.**
- **The last four years have been the warmest on record.**
- **One million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction - our children and grandchildren might only see their beautiful pictures in books.**
- **Land degradation continues unchecked.**
- **And 9 out of 10 urban residents breathe polluted air.**

Geospatial information, used in an increasing number of countries to support the review of progress towards the goals, also shows the impacts of human activities on the environment.

Many of these ecological deteriorations are caused by climate change. If we do not cut record-high greenhouse gas emissions now, global warming is projected to reach 1.5 degrees Celsius in the coming decades. These effects, which will render many parts of the globe uninhabitable, will affect the poor the most. Food production will be at risk, leading to widespread food shortages and hunger, and potentially displace up to 140 million people by 2050.

Inequality among and within countries is also increasing. And poverty, hunger and disease continue to be concentrated in the poorest and most vulnerable groups of people and countries.

- **Over 90 per cent of maternal deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.**
- **Three quarters of all stunted children live in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.**
- **People living in fragile States are twice as likely to lack basic sanitation and about four times as likely to lack basic drinking-water services as people in non-fragile situations.**
- **Youth are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults.**
- **Women and girls perform a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic work and lack autonomy in decision-making.**

Indeed, it is very alarming that we are not yet on a trajectory to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Excellencies,

Despite these challenges, we must not overlook the strong SDG response in these past four years.

Many countries have been mainstreaming the SDGs into their planning documents or sustainable development policies. Many local governments have taken the initiative to implement the SDGs systematically, in some cases going further than national governments.

Actors beyond government have embraced the 2030 Agenda. They are actively participating in efforts to reach the SDGs and becoming champions for continued improvement.

Many countries and the UN system have made efforts to mobilize the private sector in SDG implementation, and there has been a strong mobilization by many businesses.

The UN development system is repositioning itself to better support countries in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Distinguished Delegates,

This evidence-based report tells us that, despite our current slow progress, the international community can still bring the Agenda's inspiring vision to life.

Valuable opportunities exist to accelerate progress by examining the interlinkages across Goals. For example, tackling climate change requires a

global shift to clean energy, reversing the trend in forest loss, and changing our production and consumption patterns.

The Report also identifies eight systemic and crosscutting areas where political leadership and urgent, scalable, multi-stakeholder action are needed to dramatically accelerate progress over the next decade.

These include:

- **Leaving no one behind;**
- **Mobilizing adequate and well-directed financing;**
- **Strengthening effective and inclusive institutions for implementing integrated solutions;**
- **Accelerating implementation through local action;**
- **Building resilience;**
- **Investing in data;**
- **Realizing the benefits of science, technology and innovation for all; and**
- **Solving challenges through international cooperation.**

The Report further emphasizes that, to achieve the SDGs in the time remaining, multilateral action is essential on all fronts: The challenges highlighted are global problems that require global solutions. No countries or individuals can solve them in isolation.

Only together can we find solutions to poverty, inequality and climate change – the defining challenges of our time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From our successes, we know what works. The task remains for leaders everywhere is to translate these lessons into national and multilateral actions.

We must act now.

In just over two months, Heads of State and Government will gather for the SDG Summit, the first major High-level Political Forum under the General Assembly.

Drawing upon four years of insights from the HLPF, this Summit will be a special platform for giving political guidance and strengthening multilateralism for realizing the 2030 Agenda.

Joining others, I congratulate Member States on your successful conclusion of the negotiation on the Political Declaration of the HLPF. It has laid the ground for a successful Summit.

We must demonstrate how our working together can generate practical solutions. And we must ultimately deliver benefits and results where it matters most: in the lives of all people.

Thank you.
